

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 11523 231744Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2087
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET LEADERSHIP: CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH KIRILENKO

1. ON MAY 20 WIFE OF P AND C COUNSELOR BENSON ENCOUNTERED POLITBURO MEMBER AND PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY KIRILENKO WHILE VISITING A MUSEUM IN YAROSLAVL. KIRILENKO WAS IN TOWN TO AWARD THE ORDER OF THE RED BANNER OF LABOR TO RYBINSK, A TOWN IN YAROSLAVSKAYA OBLAST, AND USED HIS TWO-DAY STAY IN THE AREA TO VISIT VARIOUS FACTORIES, SCHOOLS, STATE FARMS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS TO BRING A MESSAGE FROM BREZHNEV AND TO GIVE A PEP-TALK TO THE LOCAL PARTY LEADERS ON PLAN FULFILLMENT.

2. KIRILENKO WAS RAPIDLY MAKING HIS WAY THROUGH A HISTORY MUSEUM IN THE MAIN MONASTERY OF YAROSLAVL, WITH A GROUP OF ABOUT FIFTEEN LOCAL OFFICIALS, WHEN HE PAUSED TO CHAT WITH MRS. BENSON, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HER YOUNG SON BUT WAS OTHERWISE ALONE IN THE ROOM. TO DO SO HE INTERRUPTED THE GUIDE, WHO HAD STARTED TO DESCRIBE SOME OF THE EXHIBITS. HE ASKED MRS. BENSON'S IMPRESSIONS OF YAROSLAVL REFERRED TO THE MANY HISTORICAL SITES OF THE CITY, AND DELIVERED HIMSELF OF THE TENDENTIOUS STATEMENT THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT PRESERVES AND VALUES HISTORICAL MON-
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UMENTS. HE ALSO ASKED SEVERAL PERSONAL QUESTIONS, SUCH AS THE AGE OF MRS. BENSON'S SON AND HOW LONG SHE HAD BEEN IN THE COUNTRY. HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF GREAT VITALITY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND SEEMED TO BE IN SPLENDID HEALTH FOR A MAN OF HIS YEARS. HE HAD THE AURA OF A POLITICIAN, INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE BUT EASILY DOMINATING THE GROUP AROUND HIM. HE OBVIOUSLY TOOK MRS. BENSON AND HER SON FOR

FOREIGNERS, WHICH MAY HAVE PIQUED HIS INTEREST, BECAUSE
AT THE PACE HE WAS GOING HE COULD NOT HAVE STOPPED TO
TALK TO MANY OTHER PEOPLE IN THE MUSEUM. HE DID NOT REACT
TO THE STATEMENT THAT THE BENSONS WERE FROM THE U.S.
EMBASSY. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

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